GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
RAILWAYS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:4040
ANSWERED ON:18.04.2002
USE OF WOODEN SLEEPER
SHEESH RAM SINGH RAVI

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Planning Commission directed in October, 1986 that Indian Railways should examine ways and means to drastically reduce the use of wooden sleeper turnouts in the interest of forest conservations and to maintain ecological balance in the country;

(b) whether the Railway Board continued to procure wooden sleeper turnouts till the Supreme Court imposed a ban in May, 1999 on the procurement of wooden sleepers;

(c) if so, the reasons for not acting on the directions of the Planning Commission and the Supreme Court;

(d) whether the cost of one set of wooden sleeper turnout was higher than concrete sleeper turnout by Rs.35,500;

(e) whether the Railway Board suffered a huge loss of money for not placing regular orders on the concrete sleeper turnouts;

(f) if so, the total loss suffered by the railways as a result thereof; and

(g) the action taken to tone up the functioning of the Railway Board and to fix the accountability and responsibility in the matter?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINIST RAILWAYS (SHRI O. RAJAGOPAL)

(a) Yes Sir.

(b) Procurement of wooden sleepers continued, but at a progressively reducing scale.

(c),(e),(f) & (g) Railway acted on the directions of Planning Commission and Supreme Court.Development of an alternative to wood for turnout sleepers was taken up in right earnest. A suitable alternative was found in prestressed concrete. But introduction of new technology, its perfection and full scale use takes time. Thereafter, developing infrastructure for manufacture of PSC Turnout Sleepers in adequate numbers, creating technical capabilities for the production, handling, transport and laying of these very heavy and longer sleepers also took time. Railways are developing these continuously. As a result, wooden turnout sleepers are getting replaced by PSC Sleepersprogressively. Still, some wooden sleepers are required for maintenance of existing wooden sleeper turnouts. This requirement also is reducing progressively.

(d) Yes Sir, in the year 1994-95.